



# The Wild Thornberrys

## The Wild Thornberrys

The Wild Thornberrys is the story of Eliza Thornberry, a 12 year-old girl who travels the world with her family. Producing nature documentaries, the Thornberrys wander the globe from Egypt to Antarctica in search of the planet's most exotic and endangered species of plant and animal. At every stop there is a problem to solve, a mystery to uncover and an adventure just waiting for the inquisitive, intelligent Eliza.

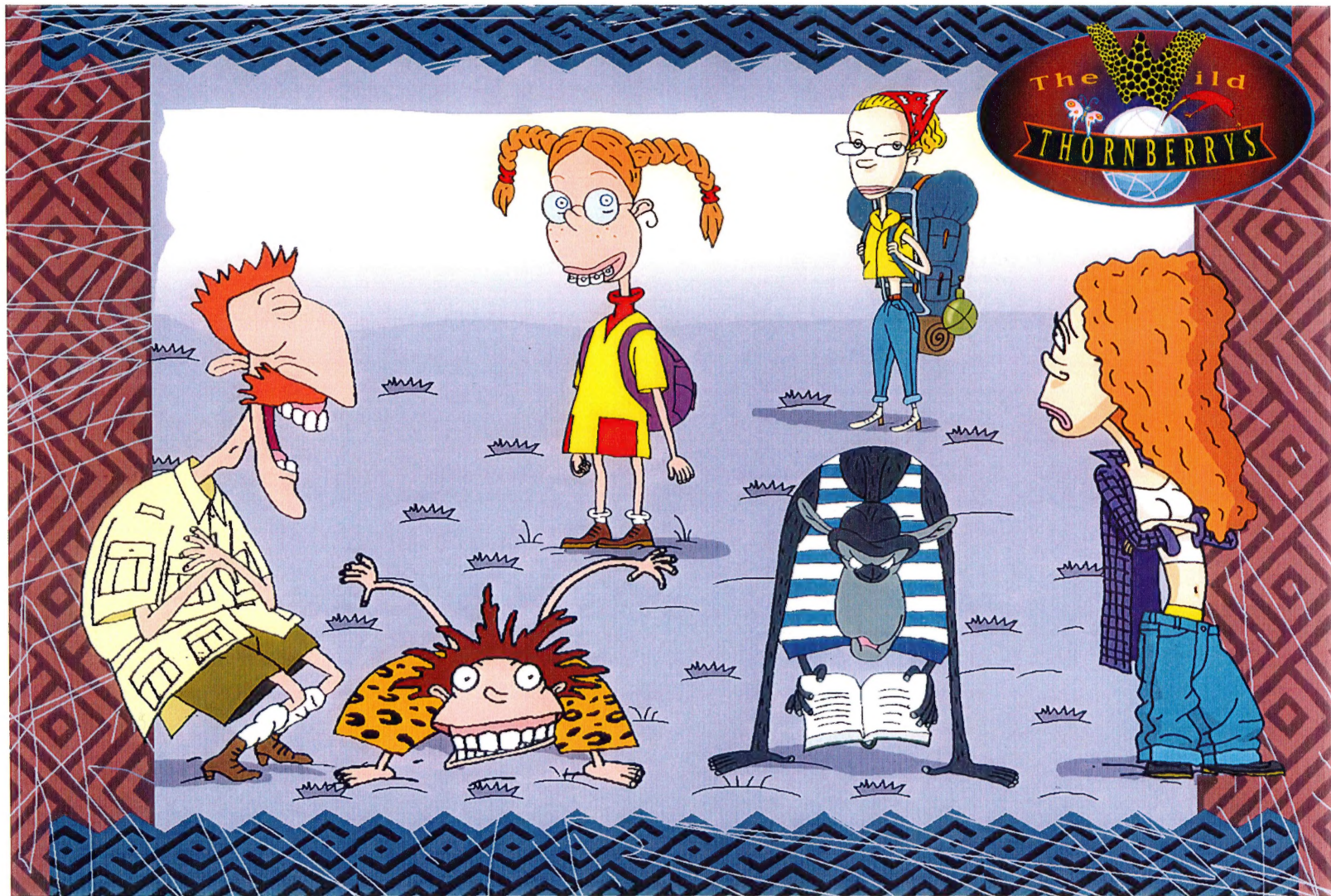
At the head of this unconventional family is the debonair Nigel Thornberry. A genius when it comes to the natural world and a child of the British aristocracy, Nigel has all the appearance and bearing of a classic explorer. However, when it comes to anything but exploring, Nigel is a bit of a dim bulb. He is kept on track by Eliza's mother, Marianne.

Marianne is a dynamo, producing the family's documentaries while giving her two daughters as normal an upbringing as she can in the middle of the Serengeti. The older of Nigel and Marianne's two girls is Debbie. This petulant 16 year-old tries to keep her love of her family, and her own thirst for adventure, hidden behind a smokescreen of cynical banter.

And finally there is Eliza, the enterprising, intractable, fearless focus of our show. While Eliza's parents are content to observe the animal world through a camera lens, Eliza can't help but jump in with both feet. The truth is, Eliza involves herself in the lives of animals more deeply than most of us might. Eliza has a slight edge over her parents and, in fact, the rest of the world. Eliza Thornberry can talk to animals.

That's right. A run in with a local healer left Eliza with the ability to talk to animals. She exchanges grunts and growl and howls and snorts with every type of animal, often discovering that their cooperation can be the key to keeping her family on track. With the neurotic chimpanzee Darwin, and the feral jungle-boy Donnie close at hand, Eliza's exploits will be the engine that drives The Wild Thornberrys











## Eliza Thornberry

• A twelve year-old adventurer

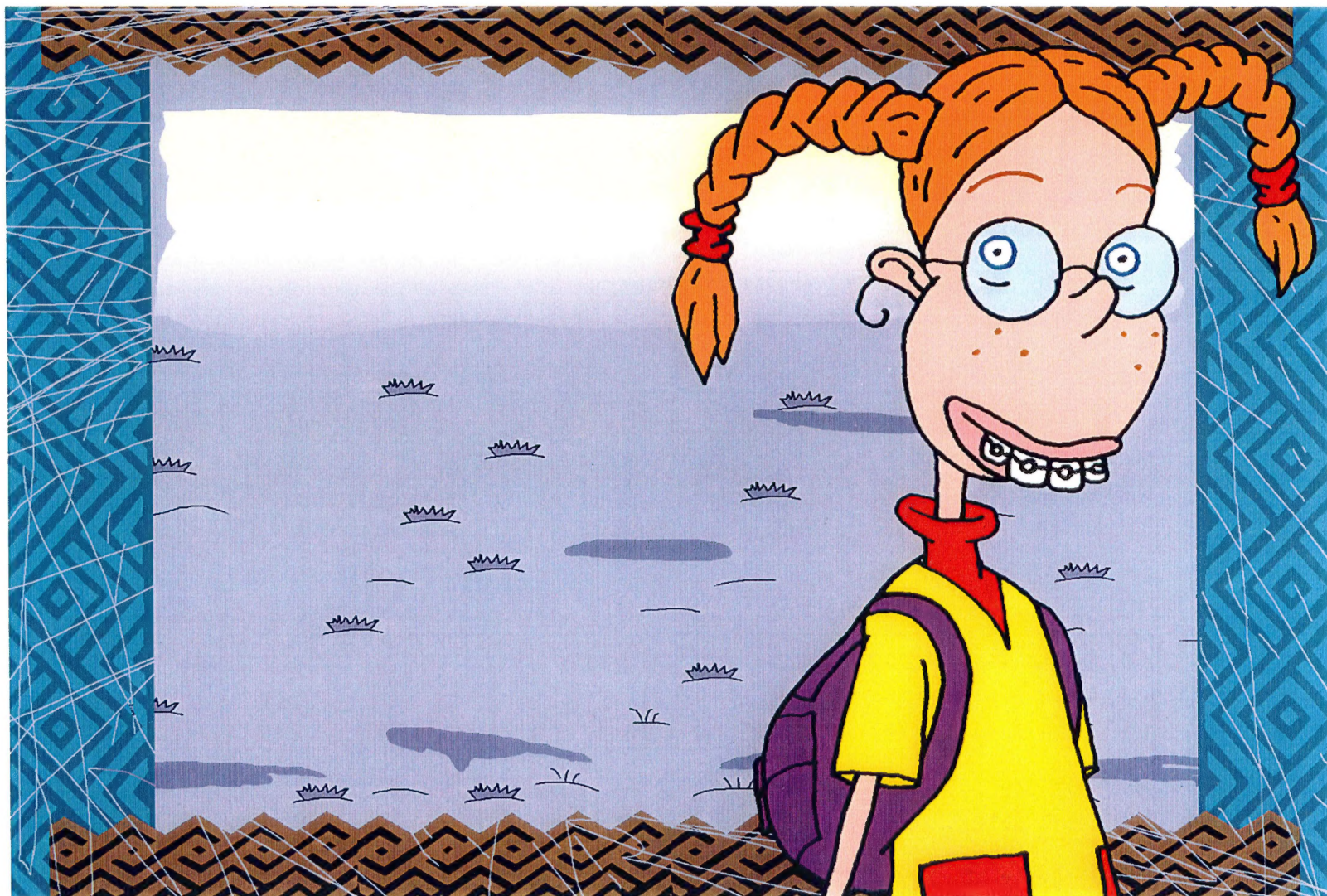
Eliza Thornberry is twelve. She is wise beyond her years, but still has her youthful sense of adventure, and an idealized view of the world. Add to that the ability to talk to animals and you can see you've got a combination that makes this young girl quite a bit of an adventurer.

Eliza sees the jungles, rainforests, deserts and grasslands of the world as her classroom, and her playground. Whether she's trying to help her parents with an assignment, or trying to save Donnie from becoming a lion's lunch, Eliza is constantly challenged by what she finds in the animal world. It takes courage and resourcefulness exceptional in a 12 year-old to complete the tasks that Eliza undertakes. And while talking to animals helps, it doesn't always solve her problems. And talking to the wrong animals can sometimes turn a bad situation into a downright emergency.

Darwin, the Chimp and Donnie, the feral boy, are the only two members of the Thornberry household who know Eliza speaks to animals. And for Eliza, the ability to talk to animals is as much of an annoyance as an asset. It's an inexact skill at best. From a distance it will appear as if Eliza is just acting like a bear or a gazelle or a parrot. But when we cut closer, we will hear Eliza's dialogue -- and that of the animal she's speaking with, in English.

Eliza is an unassuming, and somewhat unexpected hero. She has a secret skill, and a thirst for adventure that keeps her constantly in trouble. But with the help of Darwin, Donnie and a few of the local animals, she can usually get herself, and her family, back on the right track.











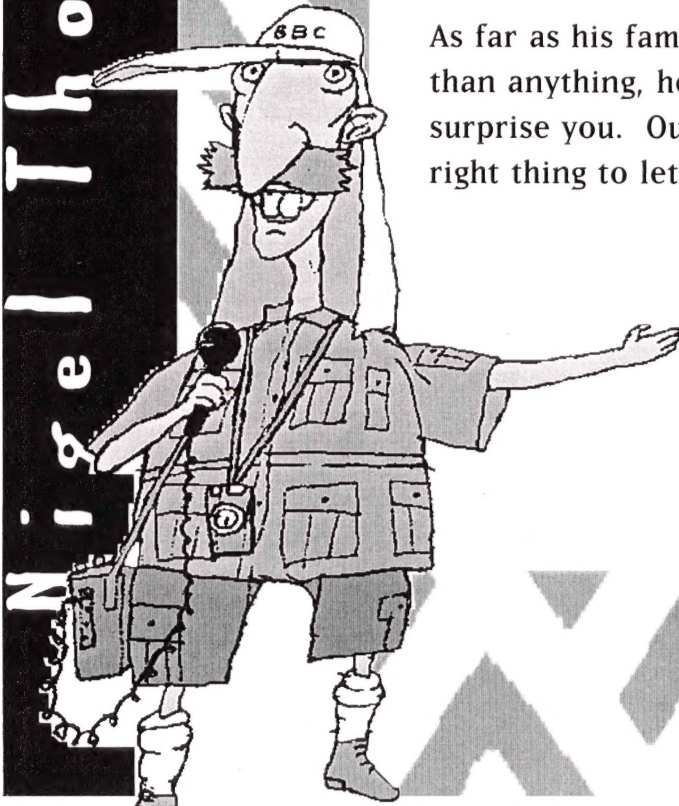
## Nigel Thornberry

• Enthusiastic,  
Positive, Clueless, 38 years old.

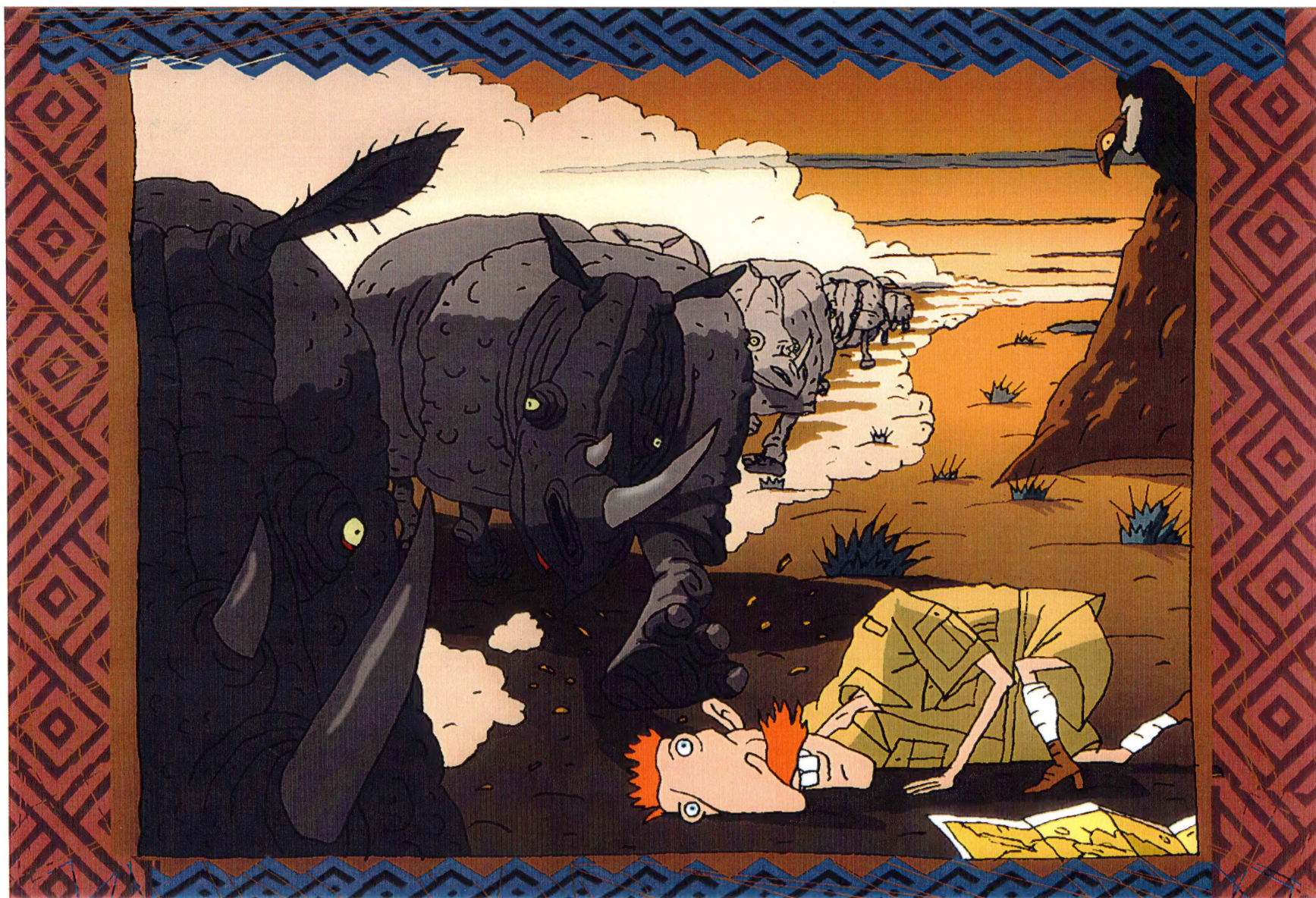
Nigel Thornberry is an adventurer/naturalist par excellence. Nigel seems to know everything there is to know about the natural world. He can also turn a couple of damp twigs into a campfire, as well as find water in the middle of the Sahara. As the on-screen host of "Nigel Thornberry's Animal World", he's an articulate and convincing presence. In all other matters, the poor man is absolutely hopeless.

Nigel is powered by unbridled enthusiasm and a truly enviable sense of wonder. Nigel Thornberry can see every sunset as if it were his first. You may attribute this to a Zen-like wisdom, or an absolute lack of long-term memory. With Nigel it is never quite clear. But as far as his work goes, almost nothing can dampen Nigel's love for the outdoors, or his enthusiasm about what might lie beyond the next hill, or across the next ocean.

As far as his family goes, Nigel is less of a genius. And while he loves and values his family more than anything, he's a little slow on the uptake when it comes to his two daughters. But Nigel can surprise you. Out of nowhere his childlike intuition will surface, and Nigel will say or do just the right thing to let his wife or daughters know how much he cares for them.









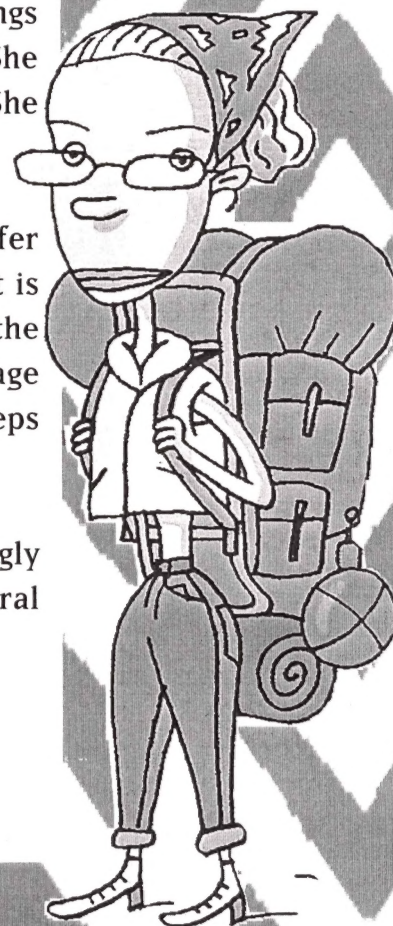
## **Marianne Thornberry** • Committed Filmmaker, Concerned Mother, 36 years-old.

Marianne is the island of sanity amidst the whirlwind of the Thornberry family. A crackerjack filmmaker, she's as committed to raising healthy, happy young daughters as she is to producing her husband's award-winning nature show.

Marianne sees the genius behind Nigel's scatterbrained behavior. But she doesn't see her husband through rose-colored glasses. She simply loves him for the things that he is good at, and forgives him for his many and comic shortcomings. She loves him the way someone would love a great but temperamental artist. She provides the structure and the logic that, if he were alone, his life would lack.

If she has an Achilles heel, it's her own fear that somehow her children will suffer the affects of the family's unconventional environment. Eliza knows this, and it is part of the reason she doesn't tell Marianne she can talk to animals. In the meantime, Marianne keeps the family fed, and keeps the documentary footage flowing into the organization that funds the Thornberrys' adventures. She keeps Nigel focused, and has almost limitless patience for his idiosyncrasies.

Forced into the role of family cheerleader, she is committed to being unfailingly positive. This demand does take its toll on Marianne, and when she does spiral into pessimism, it's not pretty (but usually pretty funny).





# Debbie

- Pouty, Thin, Self-aware and self-serving, 16 years old.

Debbie Thornberry is a quintessential teenager. She loves her family more than anything, but would rather die than let any of them know it. She's genuinely proud of her adventurous younger sister, but insults and dismisses her at every possible turn. Debbie works hard to be cool. She's surprisingly hip given the fact that she has no friends her own age and has never set foot inside an American high school.

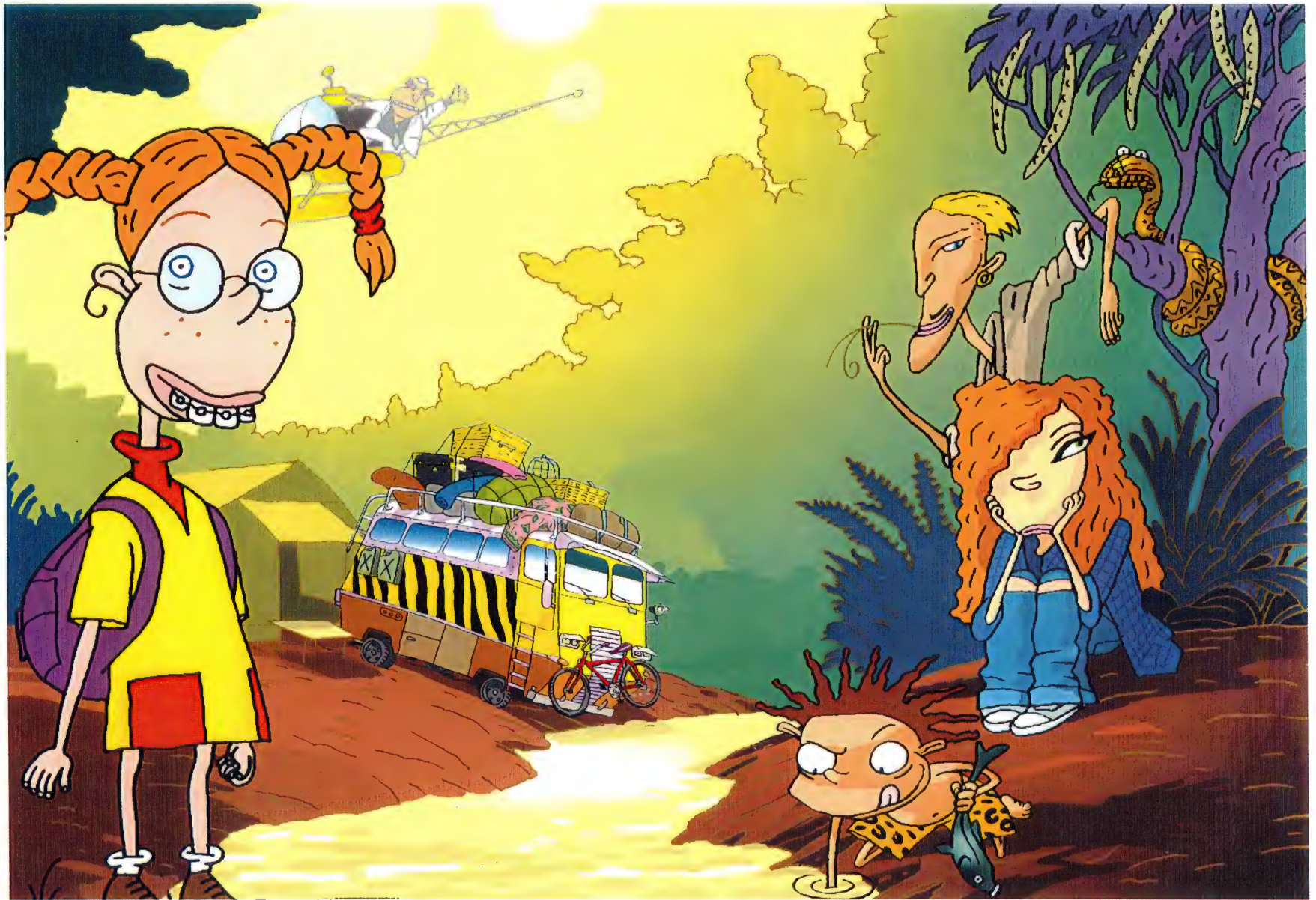
Debbie wishes her world was more "teenage-friendly." She is the show's squeaky wheel, but rather than just complain, Debbie is capable of great courage and forcefulness, but often where her own interests are concerned. She doesn't complain about not having a shower. Instead, she cheerfully uses the last of the drinking water in order to bathe.

While Debbie is capable of acts of heroism and intelligence, she finds the whole sentimental attachment to family a little nauseating. She'll stand up for her sister, or anyone in her family. But the whole time she'll be telling you what a drag it all is. But that's Debbie.

Debbie









## Donnie

• The feral Jungle-boy,  
maybe 4 years old. A terror.

Did you ever wonder why Tarzan, raised by apes, spoke any English at all? If a child was left in the jungle, isn't it more likely that he'd act a lot more like an animal than an English Lord in a Speedo? And what if that animal was incredibly strong, incredibly mischievous and incredibly hard to control? Donnie is that child: manic, destructive, mysterious and maddening.

Donnie was discovered in the jungles of Borneo. When Marianne realized this little Caucasian boy was parentless, she tried to introduce him to a tribe of Dyak headhunters, hoping they would adopt the boy. But the headhunters, afraid of nothing, already knew about Donnie. The fearless cannibals shut up their huts and hid when Marianne brought the little boy into camp. And the local orangutans scrambled into trees and wouldn't come down until Marianne had packed the boy into the family vehicle and left the area. Marianne was secretly very excited to find she had no alternative but to welcome the boy into the Thornberry family.

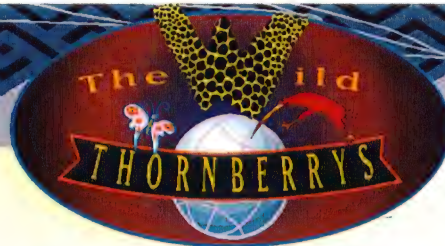
Since then, Donnie has been eating beetles, climbing into the mouths of pythons, waking sleeping lions, and forcing Eliza, Darwin and sometimes even Debbie to come to the rescue. He is agile, surprisingly strong, and completely untamable. He also has some of the same heroic qualities as Lassie the Collie. Donnie knows when something is wrong, and can apply skill and strength to saving the day just as easily as he can to dismantling the camper. But try to thank him for saving your life and he'll bite your leg and scamper back into the bush.

Donnie speaks almost exclusively in grunts and hand signs. When a word, or even a sentence slips out, no one's ever sure if Donnie has any idea what he's just said. When asked about living with the Thornberry family, Donnie replied:

"OOOOG, BhaaaPFFT, Wooof, Itchy, itchy. Bug Steak Caviar? Oooph. BaBaBaRrrraahhh. Pleasure to make your acquaintance. Brrrrruppt--Yaaaaaaa!







Donnie

the wild kid





## Darwin

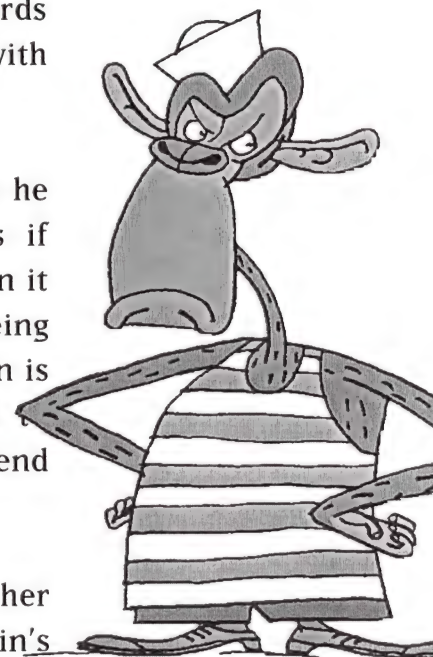
• A fastidious, neurotic,  
overly dramatic Chimpanzee.  
Age unknown.

Since the day Darwin snuck into the Commvee and used all of Debbie's Prell, Darwin has stuck so closely to the Thornberrys (and their grooming products) that they've come to think of him as just another, hairier member of the family. Most of the family regards Darwin as somewhat of a curiosity: a chimpanzee who seems to want nothing to do with the animal world.

But for Eliza, Darwin is a confidante, a friend and sometimes a protector. While he doesn't behave like a chimpanzee, to help Eliza, he would swing from trees if necessary. Most of the time, though, Darwin's friendship may be more trouble than it is worth. Darwin has rather delicate sensibilities: he is clean to the point of being obsessive, and neurotic to the point of being phobic. And sometimes, when Darwin is complaining about everything under the sun, Eliza wishes she couldn't speak animals. But she can, and because of it, Eliza has made a true, if troublesome, friend in Darwin.

Darwin often serves as the voice of doom; the angel on Eliza's shoulder warning her not to deviate from her mother's instructions. But when Eliza shrugs off Darwin's warnings and heads into the jungle, Darwin, her best friend, will always hurry along after her.

Darwin can also make himself useful. He's a stickler for manners, and knows the protocol of the animal world quite well. But Darwin is more than just a fastidious hanger-on. He has proven to be a good friend to Eliza, and a perfect lieutenant to her role as leader of their band of three. In spite of his own fears, Darwin will stand up for his friends.









## Adversaries

• Hunters, competitors, weather

### VILLAINS

The wilderness is filled with dangers, not the least of which is man. There are shameless poachers, greedy developers, bureaucrats, even rival film crews to contend with. The two most prominent of these characters are an ever-scheming pair of opportunists: Kip O'Donnell and Neil Biedermann.

Kip is the smarmy opportunist who loves the sound of his own voice as much as his environmentally disastrous money-making schemes. Biedermann (as his partner is called) is the slightly sweeter foil to Kip's relentless villainy. As Kip schemes and rants, Biedermann alternates between genuine admiration for his single-minded partner, and debilitating fear. Together they connive and plot and skulk around the world, trying to squeeze a little profit out of our planet's dwindling resources.

At least once on every continent, Kip and Biedermann will find themselves at odds with the Thornberry family. In the end, no matter how fool-proof Kip's schemes may be, Eliza and her family will end up preventing Kip and Biedermann from wrecking their particular havoc on the natural world. But they never give up. Never.

### THE ENVIRONMENT

The Thornberry family is on an expedition, not a weekend camping trip. They don't get rained on. They find themselves in the middle of monsoons. In the Thornberrys' world the sewers don't overflow, flash-floods come crashing through camp, picking up their vehicle and dropping it miles away. In fact every natural disaster will eventually cross the path of the Thornberry family. That's the way that nature is. And just as in the real world, the heat, the cold, the rain, the droughts and everything in between will affect the lives of the Thornberrys and play an important role in the stories that we tell.



Poachers (Bad Dog) Competing Filmcrew



Neil Beiderman Kip McDonnal

Merv Diller

Carson



## The Location

### • A recurring character

The Wild Thornberrys is a show about the natural world, and in many ways the natural world is the show's true star.

Because we want to make the most out of the animals, plants and cultures in each location, The Wild Thornberrys will remain in each location for five episodes. That means we'll spend a week exploring the African Savanna, and another week in the valley of the Amazon. This way we can take full advantage of the many aspects of each location that make it unique.

For the first season we are looking for dramatic Eco-systems that are defined by their climate and biodiversity. This is a very preliminary list of locations that we expect to visit in the first season:

- African Savanna and Grasslands to the edge of the Sahara
- Amazon, Rainforests of interior Brazil
- North Africa, Desert, Nile River
- India North to Nepal and the foothills of Mount Everest
- The Galapagos Islands and the Northern Andes (Machu Pichu)
- New Guinea, New Zealand and the Great Barrier Reef
- Southern Africa from the Zambezi River east to Madagascar
- Southern Andes to Tierra Del Fuego and Antarctica

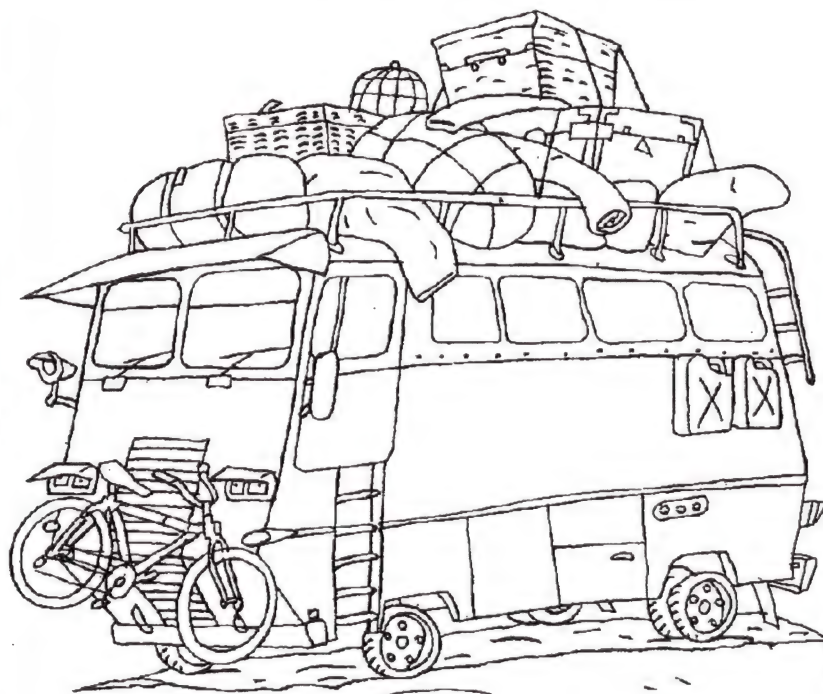


## The Commvee

- A van outfitted for traveling.

The Thornberrys' Communications Vehicle, or Commvee, is not only the family's means of transportation, it is their lifeline to the world. It is a combination of camper van and high-tech laboratory. Like Jacques Cousteau's ship, The Calypso, the Commvee is the family's refuge in untamed lands. Inside the Commvee are beds, a table, and an endless collection of useful items that fold out of the walls like an editing deck, a kitchen full of appliances, and a short-wave radio.

The Commvee walks the line between being a believable family camper and an incredible store-house of technology, from the satellite dish right down to the microwave. Under Marianne's supervision, the vehicle has been turned into an ultra-efficient post-production studio, as well as a classroom for the kids. The vehicle is close to sea-worthy, and can be adapted for whatever conditions lay ahead.













## The Animal World

- A parade of idiosyncratic characters used sparingly

When Eliza wants to talk to an animal, she must look, act, and sound as much like the animal as possible. If we see this activity from a distance, it will look as if Eliza is simply acting like one of the animals, but when the camera cuts into a close-up, we will hear the distant hoots and howls turn to a language we recognize. By cutting this way, and periodically letting bystanders like Debbie stumble onto a howling, braying Eliza, we will remind the audience that Eliza is making animal sounds, even if we, the audience, often hear their speech as English.

While the animals have distinct personalities, an animal will very rarely be at the center of a story. Animals sometimes prove to be very helpful, or very troublesome, but they are only a part of our story to deepen it. The Wild Thornberrys is, after all, about the Thornberry family, Darwin and Donnie. While we may meet an agoraphobic Camel, overcome by anxiety at having to face another trip through the Sahara, or a group of Baboons who are touchy about their blue rear-ends, they will serve the story, not motivate it.









# The Wild Thornberrys

• Story Springboards

## IRON CURTAIN

Eliza busts a young elephant out of a Kenyan game preserve, only to face predators and poachers who are out to get them.

## VALLEY GIRLS

Eliza and Debbie's combined bungling sends the Commvee careening down a mountain, where it lies mired in the mud. They come face to face with a menacing looking, but idiosyncratic tribe of Silverback Gorillas, as they are forced to work together to 'unstick' the van.

## FLOOR WARNING

When the Thornberrys are forced to spend a night in the middle of the savanna, Eliza seizes the opportunity to go hunting with a pride of lions - only to discover that Debbie is about to become a midnight snack!

## MATADI OR BUST

When Eliza, Darwin and Donnie are flung from a Matadi-bound barge and stranded on the banks of the Congo river, they must traverse the cliffs and crags of mountainous Zaire in order to catch up with her family.

## NAMINA-ENKIYIO

Challenging an ancient Maasai legend, Eliza marches into a 'haunted' forest to prove her bravery. Now, with night falling, Eliza must place her trust in the mysterious legends of the Maasai in order to find her way safely through the dark forest.

## ONLY CHILD

Eliza's imagination gets the best of her when she thinks a local teenage girl is actually a dolphin trying to abduct her sister, Debbie, into her watery world.





## **VACANT LOT**

When Eliza discovers our two villains illegally destroying acres of Brazilian rainforest, she leads the animals of the forest in an all-out battle to reclaim their homes and stop the destruction once and for all.

## **BAD COMPANY**

A swarm of mischievous prankster marmosets overrun the Thornberry camp, and it is up to Eliza to beat them at their own game!

## **MY DINNER WITH DARWIN**

After a fight with Eliza, Darwin seeks greener pastures with a local family who treats him like a king. When Eliza discovers the new family wants Darwin nice and fat for their dinner table, she must pull off a swashbuckling rescue before her friend becomes the main course.

## **ELIZA'S TEMPLE**

When Eliza discovers a secret temple, a group of jaguars believe that she is their long lost queen. Thrilled with her new royal position, Eliza gets in over her head and must escape the avenging jaguars.